

VITAL VILLAGES

UPDATE 2006

What do we want our parish to look like in the 21st century? What do we like, and what do we want to change?

These were the big questions behind the Vital Villages Project. We asked people what they thought - and the resulting Action Plans are still being worked on.

So - how far have we got?

Shop and Post Office

The temporary satellite Post Office in the Red Lion, which operates on Wednesday and Friday mornings, is flourishing. Grateful thanks are due to Bill Prince and Mo Rudd for providing the premises, and to Michael Powell and Sally Hawkins for offering such an efficient and welcoming service.

Members of the Parish Council Shop Committee have made fact-finding visits to both community-run and commercial village shops. There have been lengthy negotiations over several possible sites, but so far most options seem to have been exhausted. To date negotiations with Mr and Mrs Hiscock have not been successful, and the shop is now up for sale. A full report can be obtained from the Parish Council.

Young People

The new Wallingford School mobile skate park should be paying its first visit to the village in the summer. This project has been supported with a grant by the Parish Council.

Conservation Area

A review of the boundaries has taken place, acting on suggestions in the Parish Plan. Following a public meeting, some new areas have been added in.

Community Seating

Thanks to the Crowther family a new seat has been installed on the High Road.

PARISH WEBSITE: Thanks to a small group of people the Parish Web Site is well established. Clubs and societies have been very willing to provide copy and pictures – and it has inspired several groups to produce their own web site.

Newcomers to the village, as well as existing residents, use it to find out what's on offer – and people who have moved away use it to keep in touch. Promoting community services was a vital part of the Action Plans, so the website – together with the annual Parish Magazine - seems to be filling this need.

Other villages working on Parish Plans use the website to see what we have done – and our Parish Plan itself has been held up as a model. To read the Parish Plan and original Action Plans, go to www.brightwellcumsotwell.co.uk , click on 'Village Life' and follow the links.

Potholes!

Parish councillors take regular walks around the village to identify problems. A good dialogue has been established with the Highways Authority to make sure that potholes are repaired as soon as possible after being reported. However, funding is always a limitation.

Putting the Parish on the Map

Many people in the original survey said we needed more noticeboards. A new larger one should be installed outside the village hall at the end of May, and the Slade End notice board has been refurbished.

The Parish Council is investigating

installing a notice board on Greenmere but a location has yet to be agreed.

Village School

The school is running a pond project with the help of the Environment Group, and there are plans to take over an allotment. The head teacher writes regular articles in The Villager, and school news is reported on the web site. The school took part in the Planning for Real project.

Increasing the school's profile within the community was an important part of the Action Plans. In the original Vital Villages survey, 84% of people said they valued the village school - yet only just over half of those with children of primary school age sent their children there.

Housing

Parish Councillors do everything they can to encourage the kind of housing development that would help to build a sustainable community.

A public meeting has been held to publicise plans to build the first Rural Housing Scheme on Greenmere. Consultation with architects and the SODC planning department is in progress.

All planning officers have a copy of the Brightwell Parish Plan which they can refer to, although official endorsement of the Parish Design Statement has not been forthcoming.

Security

The CCTV installation at the pavilion appears to be succeeding in reducing vandalism.

Public Transport

The idea of a community bus does not

seem to be feasible. However, the bus service has improved (except for the X39, which no longer visits Shillingford Hill.)

Within the village, there is an hourly service to Wallingford and Didcot. If you are over 60 or disabled you are entitled to a free bus pass. Residents over 70 can apply for travel tokens instead of a bus pass.

Churches

The Thursday coffee mornings in St Agatha's church have helped to develop the church's role in the community. There is also a proposal to install toilets in St Agatha's to enable the building to be used for community activities.

Information about all the Village Churches is included in the Parish Magazine and is available on the website

A PARTY ?

It was clear from the Vital Villages survey that Brightwell people love a party. Several people mentioned the Millennium and Golden Jubilee celebrations as examples of occasions that brought the community together.

The next move is for ALL village clubs and societies to think about. What events would people like to see to continue the Vital Villages spirit?

This has given a flavour of how the Action Plan is progressing. The process of carrying out a Parish Plan and Action Plan brings communities together to look at how we can all contribute to shaping the future.

We made our Action Plan a stand alone document in the hope that it will be updated and added to periodically. We don't want to lose the momentum that was started by the Steering Committee and the Community.

If you would like to contribute in anyway to this ongoing process please contact Celia Collett 01491 835988